

~~KILLERS~~ FRIENDS of ANIMALS

**Public Hearing—
Environment Committee
Feb. 25, 2022
Testimony submitted by Friends of Animals
Presented by Nicole Rivard**

Co-Chair Christine Cohen, Co-Chair Joe Gresko, Vice Chair Christine Palm, Vice Chair Derek Slap, Ranking Member Craig Miner, Ranking Member Stephen Harding, Honorable Members of the Environment Committee

On behalf of Friends of Animals' 6,000 CT members who each May welcome the shoreline arrival of horseshoe crabs, thank you for raising HB 5140, which would ban the hand capture and killing of horseshoe crabs, whose numbers have been plummeting for years.

Seeing the writing on the wall, your own co-chair championed a ban in Stratford after Westbrook, West Haven and Milford were declared no-kill zones by the Atlantic Marine Fisheries Commission.

Yet Connecticut's quota for its annual haul is still an appalling 48,689.

The horseshoe crab is functionally extinct in Long Island Sound, according to a member of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Horseshoe Crab Specialist Group, who Connecticut is lucky to have as a biology professor at Sacred Heart University.

Let that sink in. That means that horseshoe crabs no longer play an effective role in their ecosystem and that negatively affects many other species.

The Commission downgraded the stocks of horseshoe crabs in the NY region, including the Sound, to Poor in 2019. Still, Connecticut issues about 15 killing permits a year so they can be used as bait to kill eel and whelk for consumption. Even with DEEP's new proposed regulations, the state will still allow the hand capture and killing by permit holders of up to 150 horseshoe crabs per day from May 22-July 7, excluding weekends and 5 days around the full moon in June. That means theoretically that each license holder could still kill a staggering 4,350 of these endangered, ancient sea mariners this season.

DEEP can't regulate atrocities or extinctions. We don't need to eat eel and whelk to survive, however migratory bird species do need to eat horseshoe crabs' eggs, especially the threatened rufa red knot, known for its epic biannual flights between the southern tip of

South America and the Arctic. The threatened bird heavily relies on an abundance of horseshoe crab eggs during migration. In 2021, fewer than 7,000 red knots were found in the Delaware Bay, a key spring stopover habitat. That's less than a third found in 2020.

Without sufficient horseshoe crab eggs to feed on, migratory birds take longer to migrate and breed less, hastening their demise. Sea turtles also rely on the horseshoe crab itself for food.

Connecticut's residents want to continue to seeing horseshoe crabs along our shorelines. Please ban the senseless killing of horseshoe crabs, just like New Jersey did in 2008.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Nicole Rivard
Media/Government Relations Manager
Friends of Animals

CT-based Friends of Animals is an international animal protection organization founded in New York in 1957 and advocates for the rights of animals, free-living and domestic around the world.